

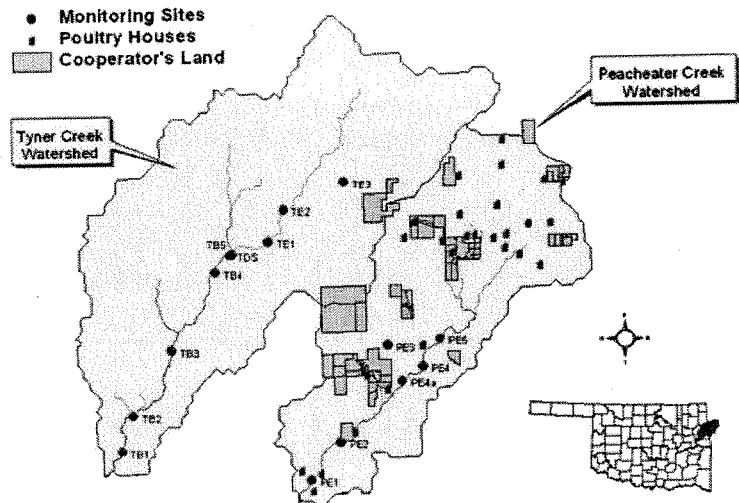


Oklahoma Conservation Commission

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Conservation Commission announces Water Quality Improvements in Illinois River Watershed

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission announced Monday significant water quality improvements in the Peacheater Creek watershed in Adair County that drains into the Illinois River. Recent analysis of six years of water quality monitoring data confirms a 27 percent reduction in phosphorus compared to a nearby untreated "control" watershed. Preliminary results for the seventh year indicate a higher reduction of possibly over 50 percent. Nitrogen loading was reduced by 29 percent in the sixth year results.



The phosphorus reduction follows implementation of an Oklahoma Conservation Commission/U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Watershed Project, funded through the federal Clean Water Act, state funds, and match from local landowners. The Conservation Commission worked primarily with the Adair County Conservation District to implement the project, but other partners included the Cherokee County Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Survey, U.S. Geological Service, Office of the Secretary of Environment and OSU Cooperative Extension Service.

Over \$190,000 worth of best management practices (BMPs) were installed to reduce nonpoint source pollution in the Peacheater Watershed. Of that total, \$150,475 were federal funds while landowners contributed \$38,967. Those practices included 49 acres of riparian (streambank) vegetation, nine acres of field buffers, 16 off-site water facilities for livestock, one poultry litter cakeout/cleanout house, two dairy lagoons and one lagoon cleanout. Prescribed grazing with cross fencing, nutrient management and alternative water supplies were used to improve pasture on 375 acres in the watershed. The project ensured proper application of over almost 23,000 pounds of phosphorus by either applying to land based on soil and poultry litter tests in accordance with agency-developed farm plans or by transporting litter out of the watershed. Two inadequate septic systems were replaced. To reduce the impacts of cattle in the watershed, three heavy use areas and two winter feeding and waste storage facilities were created.

The Peacheater Creek watershed was selected for the project because it is typical of watersheds in the larger Illinois River watershed with respect to human and livestock conditions. Its human and livestock populations are contributing to excess phosphorus loading into the Illinois River and Lake Tenkiller. The watershed covers an area of approximately 16,000 acres.

According to Mike Thralls, executive director of the Conservation Commission, the Peacheater Creek Project demonstrated that landowners in the watershed are willing to work toward a solution to water quality problems in

the Illinois River, and that the suite of practices implemented can significantly reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Tenkiller.